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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes a research project that maps implementation efforts of comprehensive and mandated change at the primary school level in The Netherlands. In examining this large-scale national reform program, the report deals with schools whose innovation efforts acquired funding from the central education department in return for their local attempt to experiment with change implementation and their own version of school reform. These specially funded schools acquired what is termed "contract status." The report focuses on the effects of contract status on the school's life and program implementation activities. The two research approaches--qualitative and quantitative--both address the same set of research questions. The qualitative section is a multicase study that involved documentation of implementation efforts in four schools. Interviews and observations were derived from theoretical notions on mandated implementation in schools to understand the nature of such processes at the local level. The quantitative section involves a survey of 25 schools, each the subject of structured interviews with the principal and of questionnaires administered to teachers. (Data analysis is in progress.) In reporting on the context of educational reform, focus is on concepts serving as leading themes for empirical study. To integrate concepts from innovation and organizational theory, researchers are currently mapping outcomes of contracted implementation work at the school level. The description of implementation of contracted change should be theoretically relevant for other cultural settings as well. (CJH)

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IMPLEMENTING MANDATED CHANGE: THE SCHOOL AS CHANGE CONTRACTOR

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 1986.

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IMPLEMENTING MANDATED CHANGE: The school as a change contractor

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Abstract

This article concerns a research project which endeavors to map and conceptualize implementation efforts of comprehensive and mandated change in schools. The setting is a national large-scale reform at the primary school level in The Netherlands.
We deal specifically with those schools whose innovation efforts have acquired special funds from the central Department of Education in return for their local attempt to experiment with the implementation of their agenda-for-change; that is, the school's version of a broad and nationally mandated concept of primary school reform. These specially funded schools acquired what we term 'contract status'. The focus is on the effects of this contract status, on what it generates in the school's life and on how it affects the conduct of the implementation activities.

We report on the context of the educational reform, but focus in particular on the conceptual notions which served as leading themes for our empirical work. An attempt is currently being made to map conceptually processes and outcomes of contracted implementation work at the school level, thereby integrating concepts from innovation and organization theory.
Though the study is situated in a Dutch institutional setting, we believe that the description of school-level implementation of contracted change may have theoretical relevance for other settings as well.

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0. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, Dutch education has been characterized by separate kindergarten and elementary school systems, for ages 4-5 and 6-12 respectively. During the last decade, following considerable debate, a new educational policy evolved (Doornbos, 1985). This policy proposed the creation of a new system for young people between the ages of four and twelve, which would be entrusted to a new type of school: the New Basic School. The kindergarten and the elementary schools were required to collaborate in implementing that policy at local level. They had to bring about the New Basic School, as partners-in-change. Consequently, all over the country new schools had to be developed with reference to a general educational policy and on the basis of knowledge and know-how currently stored in the two separate school subsystems. The new educational system had to be in full operation - at least formally - in the Fall of 1985.

In the early Seventies, however, anticipating this reform, the government set up a scheme to stimulate and to support implementation attempts by schools. Under that scheme, schools could apply and compete for funds from the central Department of Education for early innovation efforts. Successful schools acquired what we term '*contract status*'. That is, in return for their early innovation work, special funds were made available to them under conditions specified by the funding agency; hence: the schools became contractors for change. Thus, we regard this study as one of implementation processes in schools having 'contract status'.

The research on which this article is based contains a qualitative and quantitative part. In both parts we addressed the same basic set of research questions. The qualitative part is a multi-case study: over a period of one year we documented the implementation efforts in four schools. In these case studies, our interviews and observations were highly focused, being guided by a limited set of research questions. These questions grew out of theoretical

notions on mandated implementation work in schools (Van der Vegt & Bruining, 1984; Knip & Van der Vegt, 1984). The multi-case study is in fact an attempt to get a detailed understanding of the texture of those processes at the local level.
The four schools were visited regularly. We interviewed teachers, observed teaching-staff meetings, worked closely with principals and with external linking agents. Having documented the implementation efforts at each site, cross-site analysis was applied to deepen our understanding and to gain some more ground for further generalization of findings and insights (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The unit of analysis is the school.

The quantitative part, which is in progress, involves a survey of 25 schools. In each of them, we conducted extensive structured interviews with the principal, the adjunct-principal and with the educational linking agent; teachers filled out a written questionnaire. All research instruments had a structured and standardized format. The data are currently being analyzed and will be reported on later.

The design of the article is as follows.
Firstly, we report on the setting of the study: the New Basic School as an innovation concept, together with the educational and organizational changes which are involved in its implementation.
Secondly, we examine the concept of 'contract status' and the effects it has on the organizational life of the school, in terms of its external and internal relationships.
Thirdly, we look at some conditions for effective implementation work within the school, in particular the need for increased coordination and the effects of this.
Fourthly, we consider how schools respond to the new demands by creating new structures, a temporary project organization, and making efforts to anchor these in the life of the school.

Fifthly, we deal briefly with how schools could acquire and allocate external resources for the conduct of their implementation project.
Finally, by way of summary, we present a conceptual map of the study.

We will illustrate with some empirical findings to clarify the ideas. Though the study is situated in a Dutch educational setting, we believe that our description of school-level implementation of mandatory change may have theoretical relevance for other settings as well.

1. THE SETTING

The overall objectives of the New Basic School cover a broader spectrum of educational activities than its original, constituting components - the kindergarten and the elementary school. At the local level, the development of the new school would not only involve the creation of an integrated program for the hitherto separate schools, but would also seek a greater degree of individualized instruction and curricular differentiation. For many schools, it also would imply an attempt to use new classroom configurations. Furthermore, the new school is expected to increase the 'service capacity' of the school in meeting a wide range of social and individual problems of its students.[1] For example, the school with an increased 'service capacity' would be able to detect early reading difficulties of students and be able itself to remedy these. Generally speaking, in previous policy there was a strong tendency to refer children with learning and behavioral difficulties to an extensive and institutionalized network of schools for special education. Thus, the New Basic School's mission is now seen as developing its individualizing capacity to cater for a wider range of students with a variety of individual

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[1] This 'service capacity' is a central and organizing component of the overall Basic School concept as it has developed over the past years.

learning needs from various ethnic and social-economic backgrounds. It is the new school's mission to give these overall objectives and educational ideals a programmatic and workable shape. All this makes the operation more than a mere merger between two types of schools: it is a major educational reform, in content as well as in scope.

This reform represents an explicitly stated 'philosophy for the Basic School'. Various administratively-endorsed reports developed the Basic School-concept which subsequently received legal endorsement. In general, the concept as such is now widely accepted and subscribed to, although administrative problems of implementation remain.

The mandated change is comprehensive and significant in scope and extent. Approximately 8000 schools and 1,5 million students are involved. About 60,000 teachers will be affected by the educational and organizational changes in their immediate work environment.

The changes, while required by law, are laid down only as broad guidelines, leaving responsibility and considerable autonomy with the local schools for determining how they are to be achieved. It is thus left up to the people in the local schools to produce a merged and integrated new school, in line with the general curricular and organizational guidelines from the central authority. These local efforts are set in the context of curricular change, of school change and of amalgamation of two subsystems - each having a long teaching tradition.

At the local level, an appropriate structure for the integrated school has to be developed; that is, an organization which would embody the new - locally specified and adapted - mission for the Basic School. Teaching staffs have to be socially integrated, and a new leadership structure for the school has to be decided upon, while teachers and school leaders also have to acquire, to some extent, new professional skills for their changed tasks. We note that these efforts come close to the idea of 'new system creation' as developed by

Kimberley et al (1980) or the concept of 'social architecture in education' as put forward by Miles (1978).

What does this all mean in the local setting? What had existed as separate schools would in the future become one, New Basic School. Concretely, the scene is the local neighborhood: the two nearby local schools - kindergarten and elementary school - have to develop into one school. Sometimes the schools exist in the same physical building but as different educational entities: in other cases they are located in separate buildings. The governing Boards of these schools are responsible for the negotiation of a single merged administrative entity. But a great deal of work still has to be accomplished by local school personnel: designing and shaping the new school; integrating the different teaching bodies; developing a shared vision of the new school.

Clearly, a number of obstacles have to be overcome. For instance, the kindergarten and elementary schools typically operate in somewhat different teaching and child development modes, with (to simplify matters) greater emphasis given to 'play and creativity' in kindergarten and to 'intellectual achievement and cognitive learning' in the elementary school. Both modes of learning are valued in the overall New Basic School-philosophy, but a concrete program, relevant and applicable, given local resources and competences, has to be worked out at school level.

In addition, staffs of the two schools typically differ in training and educational background. Prior to the Basic School reform, they had attended different training colleges with different entry qualifications. Generally speaking, their previous contacts, if any, would be of a social rather than of a professional nature.

Thus it can be seen that the task of implementation at the local level implies the need to get to know and appreciate better people who would henceforth be colleagues; the need to evaluate and integrate differing professional identities and expertise; the need to develop an integrated curriculum and a didactic mode of operation; the need to design and build a social system embodying

the core of the innovative concept. All this constitutes the setting for schools which have to transform themselves into the New Basic School. Our study focused in particular on the experiences of those schools which were specially funded to pioneer in this setting.[2]

2. CONTRACT STATUS: ITS NATURE AND EFFECTS

Acquiring Contract Status

In the early Seventies, it became clear that the primary school system would be thoroughly restructured. It was recognized that initial experimentation in developing this new type of school would be necessary. Anticipating the reform and the adoption of a law that would provide the New Basic School with a mandatory legal back-up, the Department of Education set up a funding system to facilitate schools' starting up their implementation work.[3]
The funding system was to stimulate 'early adopters' to pioneer the proposed change. Under this scheme, schools - if they wished - could apply and compete for funds from the Department of Education. This special funding was for

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[2] Approximately 200 New Basic Schools received this special funding.

[3] This funding system can be seen as part of a larger support system for adoption and implementation. This support system includes, among others, (a) a regular flow of policy and technical recommendations on the New Basic School-concept, given by professional advisory committees to the Minister of Education and to national political and professional bodies; (b) technical support for schools, provided by regional and national educational assistance centers; and (c) the involvement to some degree of teacher training colleges in in-service training for Basic School personnel.

schools who would blaze the trail, so to speak, and whose experiences would chart the territory for those who had to follow in later years.
In order to obtain these funds schools had to submit a rather detailed proposal, committing themselves to innovation activities which they specified themselves, and indicating what aspects they would agree to implement. The funding system was competitive; proposals could be turned down or modifications requested. The application had overtones of competition about it.

In return for their implementation work, the successful schools received special resources. They acquired extra teaching hours in relation to the size of staff, e.g. a school staff of nine teachers would get an equivalent of two full-time (extra) teachers. Furthermore, these schools received an extra, standard quota of five hours of external educational assistance per week (see under section five of this article). These resources could be spent on hiring extra staff so that regular teachers could be more fully involved in the preparation for innovation work; or in attending training courses; or in freeing the principal from teaching responsibilities in order to allow him/her to fully concentrate on managing the implementation efforts in the school; or for the school to hire external consultants to assist in matters of curriculum and school change; or combinations of these. Schools were relatively autonomous in allocating their acquired resources.

On the other hand, the schools which entered this type of arrangement accepted the fact that they would have to report regularly on the progress they were making toward achieving their project goals. In addition, it was accepted that they would contribute actively to a national knowledge utilization procedure, disseminating their experiences to the wider scene of schools who had to face the reform soon.

The school which successfully applied became 'a contractor for change'; the school acquired what we termed '*contract status*. Such schools 'bought into' the change process as a deliberate decision and in the context of a relation-

ship in which there would be gains for them. Our assumption is that 'contract status' has significant effects on both the external and internal relationships of the school.

Contract status and external relationships

Contract status means that the school undertakes the development of a new way of operating - the creation of a new 'image'. Thus, contract status gives rise to an *'identity issue'*. How is the school going to present itself to its environment? The school's existing 'image' in the eyes of influential outer parties is open to question. It may be necessary to project a new image, this having, on our assumption, an important effect on the dynamics and structure of the school. Specifically, we expect the external linkage pattern of the school to undergo marked changes. Our predictions are threefold, namely, that the school will exhibit stronger or more tightly-coupled linkages with relevant segments of the environment; its external linkage pattern will cover a somewhat broader environmental spectrum and these linkages will be substantively different from the previous ones (see also Rosenblum & Louis, 1981; Wilson & Corbett, 1983). We offer three examples of this process in respect of the school's relationship with the Department of Education, with parents and with other schools.

We noted already that the funding required the school to deliver the goods under certain departmental conditions. The school has to account in written form for its accomplishments, while meeting specific administrative demands of no small scale. For example, after one year of project work, a funded school is required to produce an interim report, i.e. a full, lengthy account of its implementation work. At the end of the first project period (after two years), the report should contain a detailed description of how the work proceeded and with what results. Apart from these 'process reports', the school is also expected to make a detailed written report on its specific substantive changes. Furthermore, the school will have to play an active role in the dissemi-

nation of its innovation experiences, through materials or reports to others. Thus, it is clear that the Ministry of Education - as an external agency - is specifying local accountability and determining reporting procedures concerning implementation work, when it starts and when it will finish, how it will be controlled generally. This introduces a significant shift, albeit of an administrative nature, towards a tightening of the typically loose connection between the central Department of Education and a relatively autonomous school. In other words, the increasing (external) dependency with respect to the justification of task performance or the acquisition of resources demands - in our case - tighter coupling between the school and educational agencies.
In the course of their project work, our schools also exhibited a noticeable shift in their linkage patterns with respect to parents. Our schools reported an increase in the frequency of contacts with parents. This increase seems to occur in most of the sites we studied, as an outcome of the school's project work. Moreover, the subject-matter of these increased contacts changed during (and beyond) implementation work. Not only were there more of these contacts but, especially in relation to parents, the nature of the contact changed. Earlier contacts were reported to be somewhat peripheral to the school's core process, e.g. school trips, and incidents involving individual children, whereas later contacts dealt more with issues such as the school's educational policy and curricular decisions. In short, the increasing dependency with regard to policy issues (new pedagogical and curricular choices) tends toward a tighter linkage between teachers, administrators and parents.
Similarly, contacts with other schools tend to become more policy-related; they are of a less infrequent and accidental nature than previously. This modest change can be seen as an unintended though generally valued outcome of contracted project work.

The last two effects might be expected to occur in the case of any school attempting to implement the new concept. However, the contract status and the associated sharpening up of project proposals induce more contacts with these external parties and 'force' our schools to achieve progress within a *time-*

bound perspective and to account for and explain their new policies and practices.

Contract status and internal relationships

Contract status, as outlined above, generates a process of redefining and of renegotiating external linkages. But this renegotiation of the school's relationship with the external environment has implications for the texture of its own internal system, e.g. the nature and intensity of staff relationships, the task and decision-making structures within the school; in short, its internal linking patterns. With the arrival of contract status these will need to be overhauled, if not designed afresh, to cope with the new situation.

We will illustrate by reference to some features of schools prior to contract status. Prior to the emergence of the Basic School-concept, the situation of our schools was rather stable. In that relatively stable environment, the educational objectives and the delivery activities were loosely connected. A change in delivery activity, e.g. a reading program, would typically be accounted for by referring to considerations of availability of programs and materials, and of their relative convenience to the user, rather than by reference to criteria of local school policy or specific school objectives.

Moreover, schools in the pre-change situation are generally not strongly coordinated; typically they show a low degree of explicitness and formalization of their decision-making activities. Decisions are not strongly embedded within an explicit school vision or policy; in fact, there is generally no such thing as an explicit school-level policy. Such local policy criteria as do exist do not serve as a framework for the assessment of performance and for the evaluation of school activities.

The organizational structure of our schools is typically flat with individual teachers having a considerable degree of autonomy. Teachers are typically not

subject to close supervision, surveillance or even to overseeing by the principal, nor are they highly dependent on each other. Both teachers and school leaders, and also others in the school's environment, normally accept this situation and indeed reinforce it. As we will see, implementation work requires 'by its very nature' reasonably strong coordination in an organization. In the flat organizational structure of our schools, coordination efforts, usually associated with explicit influence attempts, run counter to prevailing egalitarian norms in the school. Finally, in the pre-change situation of the school, school staffs do not typically respond as a highly integrated organizational unit.

What is *the impact of the arrival of contract status* on these features? They become critical once the school opts for contract status and starts implementation work. To illustrate this: In order to get the funding, a project proposal must be drafted. In essence, drafting the proposal means connecting the innovation project goals to current school practices and inserting them in the future of the school. So, the current weak linkages between objectives and delivery activities have to be revised and tightened. This also implies firming up the school's policy, since drafting a proposal for change is to declare the future policy of the school; i.e. how the school will appear in the future.

Given that an *agenda-for-change* has to be agreed upon, the school has to face the problem of tightening its decision-making procedures. In our experience, this induced power and influence issues in the typically flat organizational structure of the schools. For example, school leaders had to adapt significantly to this changed situation. A new role had to be developed, geared to project management; a role which implies active overseeing and steering, and even surveillance of implementation activities by teachers. In short, the school leaders' concern is the exertion of influence, seeing to it that work

gets done in accordance with project plans.[4]

Regarding the school as an 'organizational unit', we note that when contending for funding vis-a-vis the external world - policy makers, administrators, board members, parents, other schools - the school must behave as an 'organizational unit', and has to continue behaving this way. This very fact impinges on the school's loose decision-making structure, particularly on the leadership and coordination pattern, necessitating more and tighter coordination to control project activities. Concretely, staffs had to answer two fundamental questions: One, should we apply and compete for special funding? and two, what specific items-for-change are we going to commit ourselves to? To go ahead with an application for the funding meant that the school was making a decision as an organizational unit on both these questions.
In short, it seems that contracting for a comprehensive innovation implies a degree of unsettling the existing linking patterns; it means dismantling some existing practices and partly substituting new ones. For a short while the school may give the appearance of being somewhat disorganized. This will soon be followed - as in our schools - by attempts at re-structuring, often even over-structuring with tight planning and detailed time-schedules for implementation work. We observed that this leads - in the final project period - to a less detailed and more flexible planning and working mode.

On this point we draw on some of our preliminary findings. For instance, we observed that a number of our school staffs, especially school leaders, initially adhered strongly to their rather formal, elaborate time schedule for progress, usually designed early on in the project. In many cases, that

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[4] We contend that the current concentration in the literature on the role of the school leader not only reflects a focus on implementation problems, but also results from an awareness of the variable of power and influence in the innovation process at the local school level. (Leithwood, Rutherford & Van der Vegt, 1986; Fullan, 1984; Van de Grift, 1984.)

schedule pretty much dominated early implementation work. Later on, school staffs tended to become more relaxed about it, and they developed more flexible and less demanding work schedules and structures, while still being committed to their overall project goals. Interestingly, these planning and work schedules and structures (which decorate the wall in the principal's office!) seem to fulfill an important legitimizing function in the school.
Under these conditions, detailed planning schedules - also a requirement of the funding agency- serve as a justification for influence attempts by the principal, whose problem it is to adopt and accept his/her new management-for-implementation role.

In general, the external requirement of setting an agenda for change, of agreeing on change goals and of deciding how to approach the comprehensive change program puts the weak linkages among people, procedures and structures within the school under considerable pressure. The general tendency is to strengthen the linkages.

3. IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION

Implementation, particularly in a contracted format, induces a power and influence issue in the school, as we noted above. Implementation work unsettles, to some degree, existing influence patterns, since it demands tighter coordination than heretofore. And coordination implies - in one way or another - the exertion of influence.
In the previous section, we discussed how contract status gives rise to an increased need for coordination. In the course of our research we observed two further pressures for increased coordination. The first arises from the very nature of implementation - a complex and varied set of activities. The second pressure comes from the complexity of the innovation concept - achieving coherence among innovation components. We now discuss each of these in turn.

Coordination and the implementation task

Elsewhere we have compared the features of the implementation task with those of adoption.[5] In short, adoption is a 'holistic' activity: the innovation concept or the new program is assessed and assimilated 'as a whole'. Adoption will finally bring about a response to the totality of the concept; it will be intellectually and motivationally assessed 'in toto': What does the New Basic School mean to me? for me? to us?
Implementing, on the other hand, is a more concrete, fragmented 'nuts-and bolts' affair, involving a series of discrete activities in classrooms and work groups. These discrete activities are usually carried our by disparate individuals and work groups, since the complex task at hand will have to be structured and split up into separate sub-tasks, assigned to various persons. Teachers and school leaders are working on a variety of implementation tasks throughout the building, in the privacy of their classrooms, in faculty settings, outside the school. In all our schools, work or taskgroups were installed, with special assignments and responsibilities for subtasks such as developing new materials, designing a new curriculum, experimenting with teaching approaches, drafting sections of the school's new (externally required) policy document. It is clear that implementation is not everybody participating in the same task, but everybody pursuing his of her segment of a total, complex and unfamiliar task. These diverse, discrete and dispersed activities - inherent to implementing a complex innovation - call for coordination, to orchestrate and to steer the process of implementation.

We briefly mention another feature. Implementation activities provide the school with immediate and concrete information on what things look like and how they work in actual - new - practice. Implementation, more so than

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[5] The following description draws partly on a paper by Van der Vegt & Bruining, in: Schoolleadership and the Implementation of Innovations, ISO, University of Nijmegen, 1984.

adoption, is 'for real', as it means developing commitment to a concrete reality as opposed to the more idealistic commitment to an overall vision at the adoption stage. Adoption is more an 'as if' situation: What would things look like if ..? This leaves the school staff - though possibly threatened or excited by the new reform - relatively unaffected in terms of actually having to change their working practices. As such, adoption is a 'there-and-then' task, whereas implementation means doing things in the 'here-and-now'. Implementing usually is 'close to the bone' as change looks less like an anticipated future than in the adoption stage: the realities of change begin to bite. For example: at one staff meeting which we observed, a discussion was taking place on a curriculum change which the entire staff had previously agreed. Suddenly one teacher asked with great feeling - almost in tears - to be relieved of responsibility for this change as she felt it pushed her beyond her training and competence.

The very concreteness of implementation work brings the innovation home to people; it implies direct experiential contact with the innovative concept. Even the 'nuts and bolts' of the existing organization can be shaken up and disputed. For example, in our schools seemingly simple and trivial procedures such as the registration of students had to be re-established: Who will be responsible? for which category of students? Problems over items like this one were not uncommon; they illustrate that the nuts and bolts can become important issues. In this respect, coordination seems important to establish and to demonstrate not only the connectedness of these concrete activities but also of the connectedness of immediate experiences teachers are having with components of the innovation. This coordination might develop *coherence among experiences*, so that teachers can make sense of what they are concretely involved in (see also Fullan's concept of 'the meaning of educational change', 1982).

The concreteness also means that implementation provides an important feedback function on the workings of the program, here: the development of a new school. This immediate feedback is on how the program fits into daily practic-

es and on how it accomodates to organizational structures. However, as we saw, it is likely that this feedback data will be generated in dispersed locations and on various levels in the school, i.e. in classrooms, in workgroups, in the principal's office, in the former kindergarten section. Consequently, the gathering and evaluation of the data are crucial, and this means exerting influence for collecting them from the various locations, so that they can be put at the service of further implementation activities, i.e. coordination.
There are many ways of achieving coordination. One way that we observed was practiced in a school where the implementation task had been broken down and entrusted to three separate taskgroups. These groups used to meet every Tuesday afternoon in separate locations. Clearly there was a risk of lack of coordination in the innovation project overall. However, the principal used to visit each of these group every week and himself monitor the progress.

Achieving coherence among innovation components

Implementation as discussed above is to get the innovation 'in place'; here we deal briefly with the task of getting the innovation components 'in tune'. This other source of coordination-for-implementation concerns the achievement of coherence of a comprehensive innovative concept.
The New Basic School-concept consists, as we saw, of various components, such as an educational philosophy (e.g., service capacity ideals), curricular principles and content (e.g., emphasis on individualization and new classroom structures), a school concept and related organizational structure (e.g., the specific identity and overall mission of the school). These components are connected, conceptually and operationally (see the term 'innovation configuration', Hall & Loucks, 1978). Indeed, in early advisory policy reports on the New Basic School, a number of connected guiding principles were spelled out, dealing with various aspects of the new school. However, this coherence is endangered in the process of implementation. One component may be highly valued while another is neglected. A new classroom layout may be enthusiastically

implemented, but the underlying educational 'philosophy' may not be understood. The implementation outcome - if any - can be a conceptual misfit.

Different components of our innovation have different locations or subsystems in the school. Some components affect the lower grades to a greater extent, whereas others apply only to the governing board, and others still take in the whole school. But together they represent the innovation concept. It is likely that components will receive differential weight and treatment in each subsystem or on each level of the school. In our case, the 'agenda-for-change' implies work in different regions of the school, and in this process the connectedness of the concept runs the risk of falling apart into loosely coupled pieces. For example, constructing the new school could be seen by staffs as an exclusive affair of the lower grades, namely, the kindergarten and the lowest grades of the former elementary school. The rest of the school then 'comfortably' exports the burden to these two subsystems, thereby reducing considerably the innovation concept by leaving the other relevant subsystems in the school relatively unaffected. Consequently, the scope and full content of the innovative concept will in fact be disregarded. Coordination of the implementation activities is required to counteract these tendencies, to ensure that implementation takes place throughout the organization and at appropriate times.

Although the New Basic School-concept as officially set out is thought of as a relatively coherent whole, the subsystems of the school which will have to implement the concept may very well be loosely coupled. The most obvious example of this is the integrated curriculum which has to be achieved by what are initially two separate entities - the kindergarten and the elementary school. Therefore, we assume that the development of a sufficient degree of linkage, (especially in terms of the school's decision-making and mutual support structures) will be critical to its implementation success.

Realistically speaking, however, most innovations are generally not all that well-knitted initially. This is in fact true of the New Basic School-concept; guiding principles and practical guidelines are not fully interwoven into a well-defined texture. It is in the very process of implementation that compo-

nents which were initially only loosely linked may receive tighter, more solid and coherent linkage. The task here is not just to protect existing coherence but actually to develop coherence among components as one goes along.

In general, this second pressure for coordination deals with 'component linkage'; that is, tuning the components of the innovation, timing their differential development and matching the operations within and among components.

In summary, in this section we have discussed two subtle but distinguishable pressures for tightening the linkage patterns in the school: (a) the very nature of the implementation acitivities (coordination as orchestrating the implementation tasks); (b) the multiplexity of the innovation concept (coordination as harmonizing major innovation components). In the previous section we also discussed the school's contract status as a source of coordination (coordination as synchronizing external with internal work requirements). This all points to the need of concerted action in schools.

The conceptual organizer for our discussion so far is a central proposition of our research, which reads: Intensifying coordination generates differences in influence in the school; implementation work induces issues of power and influence, and causes a redefinition of power relationships. The power and influence relationships are liable to be reshuffled. Implementation processes force the school 'to reorganize' along the power dimension. The school and its members are thus confronted with finding a balance between a degree of centralization of power (in the service of coordinating complex implementation efforts), while maintaining a degree of decentralized member participation (in the service of carrying out concrete activities in different regions of the school and of developing a sense of empowerment on their part).

4. CREATING NEW LINKAGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION WORK

The thrust of our argument so far has been that the nature and scope of the implementation task forces the creation of new linking patterns and strengthens or weakens old ones.

How do schools cope with this new situation? We mention two approaches. The first one implies the design of new *structural linkages*, and the second the development of new *normative linkages* (see also Wilson & Corbett, 1983). In both cases, schools are faced with the problems of designing devices - e.g. new workgroups, coordinating roles, a new philosophy for the school - which seek to establish new connections between specific organizational elements. Their task is the 'patterning of new dependencies': units and processes in the school are organized and shaped into a new configuration of dependencies, on a temporary basis in order to facilitate implementation work.

These new devices as they become situated in the school will become part of the school's organizational life, but with a rather ambitious mission, namely, to change the immediate environment in which they are actually embedded. Thus, careful design is warranted.

Structures for implementation work

In dealing with structures for implementation work we will refer first to the need for these structures to be matched with the particular phase of innovation which is being worked on. Secondly, we will refer to what we believe is a basic characteristic of temporary structures in our context, namely how close it is to the core processes of the school.

In terms of steering innovation processes, schools will have to be managed differently according to the particular major innovation task at hand. This theme has been elaborated extensively: see Zaltman et al. 1973; Hage & Aiken,

1970; Berman, 1981. In essence, the theme says that planned innovation requires specific design for each of the major innovation subprocesses; that is, a *specific temporary structural arrangement* which fits or matches the basic characteristics of that subprocess, be it adoption, mobilization implementation, or institutionalization.

We note that an arrangement for implementation needs specific design.[6] The characteristics of the implementation design are building start-up facilities, designing structures for the conduct of the activities, developing support networks, and installing information channels for progress surveillance and evaluation. One reason why innovation work frequently fails at the implementation stage is that the implementation is attempted using a structure which, however appropriate it may have been for, say, the task of developing project proposals on a school-wide basis, is not a good fit for implementation work. That structure has 'outlived' its usefulness.

The new structural arrangement is seen as a device, as an instrument; it serves to establish linking patterns (Daft, 1983). The device can be situated in the school with various degrees of centrality; that is, close to the school's core activities or relatively distant and buffered from the educational delivery system. This is an important matter of strategic design, though in practice it is often not a rational or deliberate decision.

We believe that an arrangement designed to facilitate implementation will have to be situated close to the educational day-to-day operations of the school. In other words, the strategic design of implementation implies a relatively close structural connection to the delivery operations, so that ongoing educational activities can be influenced directly in line with innovative intentions. Situating it close to the day-to-day activities facilitates direct

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[6] In practice, schools in The Netherlands readily adopt temporary structural arrangements such as steering groups. There is almost a tradition going back a number of years by which the design of such structures is emphasized and propagated by the national educational support centers.

transfer of information pertaining to the innovative concept.

Our schools differed along the dimension of closeness of their implementation arrangement to actual classroom practice. This degree of closeness could be established in various ways. For example, we did this by studying the elapsed time between a curricular decision taken by a new taskforce (as a component of the implementation structure) and the actual start of implementing that decision in the classroom in terms of 'doing things differently from then on'. In one of our schools we noted that individual teachers were asked to report to the temporary taskforce each week on the progress of implementation in their class during the previous week. This represented a short elapsed time between decision-making and actual classroom work. Our assumption is that there will be more effective implementation in schools where temporary implementation arrangements are situated relatively close to classroom practice, as compared to cases where those arrangements are more distant from the classroom. However, closeness to classroom practice in itself is not enough. Protection and facilitation of the implementation process by means of organizational power is also required.

Organizational power is needed to provide close linkage between the temporary structure and those parts of the core operations it is designed to serve. It is not uncommon for decisions made by a taskforce to be impeded by administrative or procedural blockages. The continuous exertion of influence will then be needed to clear such blockages and to safeguard and buffer the new practices. For example, in one school a decision was made to install a new system of recording the progress of individual pupils, so that a longitudinal record would be available for each student. This required teachers to change from their individualistic (and 'uncommunicable') style of record-keeping to a standardized format. Considerable effort on the part of the principal was necessary to accomplish this change and indeed to prevent it being sabotaged by some teachers. This aspect of protection of implementation differs from the case of adoption. During adoption, protection can be offered by structurally isolating the adoption task from ongoing daily operations - see the concept

of 'temporary social system' as developed by Miles (1964). But we noted that implementation work must not be isolated from daily, routine operation. Implementation thus cannot be protected by isolation. Therefore, it needs continuous exertion of organizational power.

In our view, a temporary structure for implementation will have to be embedded in the existing work and authority structure of the school organization. Implementing is a front-line activity. The relative absence of structural protection of the implementation activities - in contrast to adoption work - can be compensated for by lending organizational power to the temporary arrangement. In our schools, this was frequently done by assigning the school leader as "change coordinator". This implied the position and the authority to evaluate actual barriers in the school in the light of competing priorities, and the operational power to remove or to undo these barriers in the service of implementation. An important condition for successful implementation is that this particular power function be located close to the actuality of the implementation activities. This operational use of power is, among others, characteristic of what Witte (1973) labels as 'Machtpromotor'. Pertaining to the role of the school leader, this implies problem-solving or trouble-shooting activities on his/her part, while staying close to the project, particularly in the early start-up and in the final phase of implementation where new practices become more routinized and require stabilization.

In our case, this type of school leadership is seen as indicative of the centrality of the temporary structure with respect to the school's authority structure. Again, our schools differed as to this centrality. Many of our school leaders were involved in implementation work; however, their prominence in the temporary structure differed greatly. Some school leaders were only peripherally involved; in these cases coordinating roles were carried out by one of the teachers, in particular the assistant principal. That will lead us to compare our schools in terms of their differential implementation outcomes in relation to the degree of linkage between the temporary structure and the authority structure.

We turn now to some additional points that we have noted about temporary structures for implementation. In times of comprehensive and demanding change, an organization needs domains and regions of relative security and stability. Paradoxically, it is the temporary structure which may provide this stability and security. This is a seeming contradiction, although it is crucial for the study and conduct of complex change (Schon, 1971). As we mentioned above, the relatively close linkage of the temporary structure to the actual classroom operations, and to the school's authority structure is assumed to be of importance: undoubtedly, this will induce unrest; a certain amount of instability, inherent to implementation, will arise.

However, the temporary arrangement-for-implementation also represents *domains-for-change* and concrete *regions-for-work*, which if clearly defined and their mission delineated and supported, may actually provide security and stability for their members. (Quote from a principal's interview: 'In these coming weeks, it is clear that the taskgroups will exclusively work on the testing out of some math materials for the fourth and fifth grades, and we see this as a step towards the renewal of ...)

Furthermore, the work structure for implementation may have both a time dimension and a program dimension; that is, it shapes people's *time* perspective in relation to the change, and it places *topics* on the agenda-for-change. In other words, work may proceed on specific substantive topics seen in a relatively specific time frame. These characteristics of the temporary structure contribute to a sense of continuity on the part of the teacher whose work context has been unsettled by complex reform demands. Thus, the paradox is that the temporary, sometimes even provocative, structure for change can have a stability and continuity-providing capacity, the assumption being that this type of stability facilitates implementation work.

We did not study this feature of the temporary structure in depth. However, we used the degree of (semi-)permanency or formality of the temporary structure (i.e. explicit procedures and rules regulating the conduct of various aspects of implementation work) and the number of structural modifications

which occurred over time as indicators for the stability of the implementation structure.

A final note. While we refer to temporary structures, it happens that components of this structure may become permanent and live on after the completion of the innovation project. In another study of ours, we noted that coordinator roles in particular have the tendency to become enshrined in the on-going life of the school (Verhagen et al, 1984). Rosenblum and Louis also made this observation (1981). In our case, we speculate that this may be because these roles provide an on-going function to the school leaders (which may be relevant to their career prospects) while at the same time providing the teachers with a service which can be of use to them but which is not 'bluntly hierarchical'; thus combining the advantages of the valued flat, egalitarian school organization with a source of help.

The development of normative linkages

In relation to our implementation theme, we made a distinction between two types of linking patterns: structural linkages and normative ones (see also Daft, 1983). There are normative linkages of various kinds, for example, norms as to collegial sharing which may bring together teachers and school leaders in a supporting pattern. Here we limit ourselves to the effect of the development at the school-level of a *concept for the new school*. Such a local school-concept is related to the development of an image of the school's future educational identity. This process comes close to what we referred to above as the achievement of coherence among the innovation components. But note that we add a new aspect, namely the functioning in the school of a perspective or vision among school staff on the future educational identity of their school, albeit in a global or incomplete way.

A crucial part of this process is the local development of a *shared perspective* on how the school-in-change will appear in the future. We assume that

this will contribute to the (gradual) establishment of new normative linkages within the school. The viability of the school's own concept, its self-image so to speak, may fulfill a compelling *reference function* for the staff. The presence of such a concept may enhance normative integration and provide for new linking patterns.

In our research project, we are interested in the extent to which the implementation activities are embedded in a 'vision-and-mission'. In our conceptual map, this refers to the degree of what we term *'direction/concept clarification'* given to local implementation work: Are the teachers provided with a clear, motivating vision of what the change at school level is all about? Do teachers have a concept or desired state of affairs that serves to focus attention and energy: a general goal which serves to mobilize people's work and provides criteria for choosing and carrying out shorter-run activities? In Lewinian terms, this is the 'goal region' - the place one wishes to move into. In essence, it means providing the activities with 'meaning'. We see this as an important function in the conduct of implementation work.[7]

Our schools differed greatly in this respect. At one extreme, there is a small number of schools which developed a strong conceptual image of the future state, thus giving planners and implementers directional guidelines and

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[7] This is one of four functions which we are currently elaborating. The other three are: 'directional pressure' (concerned with bringing about conditions in the school under which people know that implementation work is taken seriously, that action and investment are expected, and that deadlines and time-bound work are for real); 'latitude definition' (specifying the range of acceptable paths to project goals, i.e. distinguishing between legimitate individual discretion, and attempts to subvert or abandon components of the innovation concept); 'assistance mobilization' i.e. school's capacity to acquire, protect and actualize resources pertinent to its implementation work.

lending some 'missionary flavor' to the activities. At the other extreme, there were schools whose implementation activities were carried out in a highly fragmented, ad-hoc manner, without reference to a future state of the school. In the latter schools, people's innovation work in effect lacked reference and perspective; the condition of 'direction' was poorly developed and attended to.

Our principals, who usually performed central coordination roles, naturally also differed greatly in this respect. Some were highly focused on the formation of the school concept. They actively attempted to relate concrete activities to it, thus lending meaning to these activities by framing them in a wider context of change. They articulated a local version of the general concept of the Basic School. In their daily interactions with teachers, they were also ready to explain and to give reasons as to the 'why' of the school's innovation work. These principals focused the implementation on a relatively articulated end state of the school, hence our term 'direction'. However, other school leaders missed the importance of this relationship. They were not able to develop a reasonably strong school perspective which would focus and frame people's work.

5. MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Schools which acquired 'contract status' would have to organize themselves for implementing their agenda-for-change. This structural aspect - how to organize for work? - was the subject of our discussion in the preceding section. We noted that people in our schools designed a temporary structure for their implementation work, thus creating new structural linkages. Some of these structures were simple, others more elaborate; some were closely situated to the delivery system while others were only loosely connected to the school's core activities.

But more remained to be done at the school level. Schools like ours which deal with complex and demanding change were going to need new inputs, i.e. new information, materials, skills, human resources. The arrival of contract status meant that schools had to seek new inputs from inside and outside, to negotiate about resources and to make the best use of assistance from outside.

Resources for our schools were in fact available. We mention three major resources. Firstly, at national level, there are provisions for technical support, supplied by a national support system and framed in RDD-mode and structure. This support includes curriculum materials, guidelines and suggested versions of teaching practices. Secondly, at regional level, people in the school can be assisted, in a face-to-face helping mode, in their dealing with their agenda-for-change and in their coping with educational and organizational concerns on the way to the New Basic School. This service is supplied by regional support centers. Schools usually have a long-standing, continuous relationship with their support center. There is a network of approximately 60 regional centers, which covers the country and caters for almost every (elementary) school.
These two resources - national and regional - are available free for all schools in the country, not just for those who have contract status.
Thirdly, however, schools with contract status obtained additional funding from the central educational authority. Specifically, all these schools received (a) an extra, standard quota of five hours of educational support per week, to be provided by the regional center. Furthermore, contract status schools obtained (b) extra teaching hours related to the size of school staff. It is important to note that schools were relatively autonomous in deciding how to spend these additional inputs, but their project plan required a statement on resource usage.

Having sketched the availability of resources, we turn now to some questions of how effectively schools mobilized and utilized these resources. We have subsumed our observations of a school's efforts into questions such as: Was

the school able to specify its needs, and how specific were requests for help? (specificity of mobilized support); How did the school allocate its resources? for teacher training? for administrative and coordination work? what mix did the school achieve? (pattern of resource allocation); How frequent and how intense were contacts between the school and its support agency (frequency of support contacts); Were parties engaged in a contract-building activity? i.e. was support provided in the framework of a helping contract-for-project work, or was it done in a somewhat unsystematic fashion? (the overall strategy for support). To illustrate, we briefly elaborate on some of these questions, notably the specificity and contract-building dimensions.

Although the resources were relatively readily available, schools nonetheless had to make some efforts to reach out to acquire them and more importantly to relate them to the conduct of the project. Our findings are that our schools not only differed in terms of the actual amount of resources mobilized, but more significantly in the degree of specificity of the imported resources. Schools, particularly those with contract status, could if they wished, negotiate for *project-specific support*. That is, their external support could be diverted to project goals and to current concerns, instead of relying on the continuation of the regular asisstance they normally received from their centers. Thus, assistance could be focused and put directly in the service of project efforts. We will elaborate. From the perspective of the support agency, assistance could be more or less explicitly framed within the school's agenda-for-change, and delivered within the temporary structure of project work. At one extreme, assistance activities were fully built into project work of the school, focused on the implementation goals and led by the planning and by the local events of implementing. Assistance work was tightly linked to project work at the school level, and consequently varied with project events and processes. Support could be looked on as being given an integrated role in the project organization. It could also be found to have an active role close to the steering center of the project. At the other extreme, assistance was only loosely connected to project activities. Support was situated at a rela-

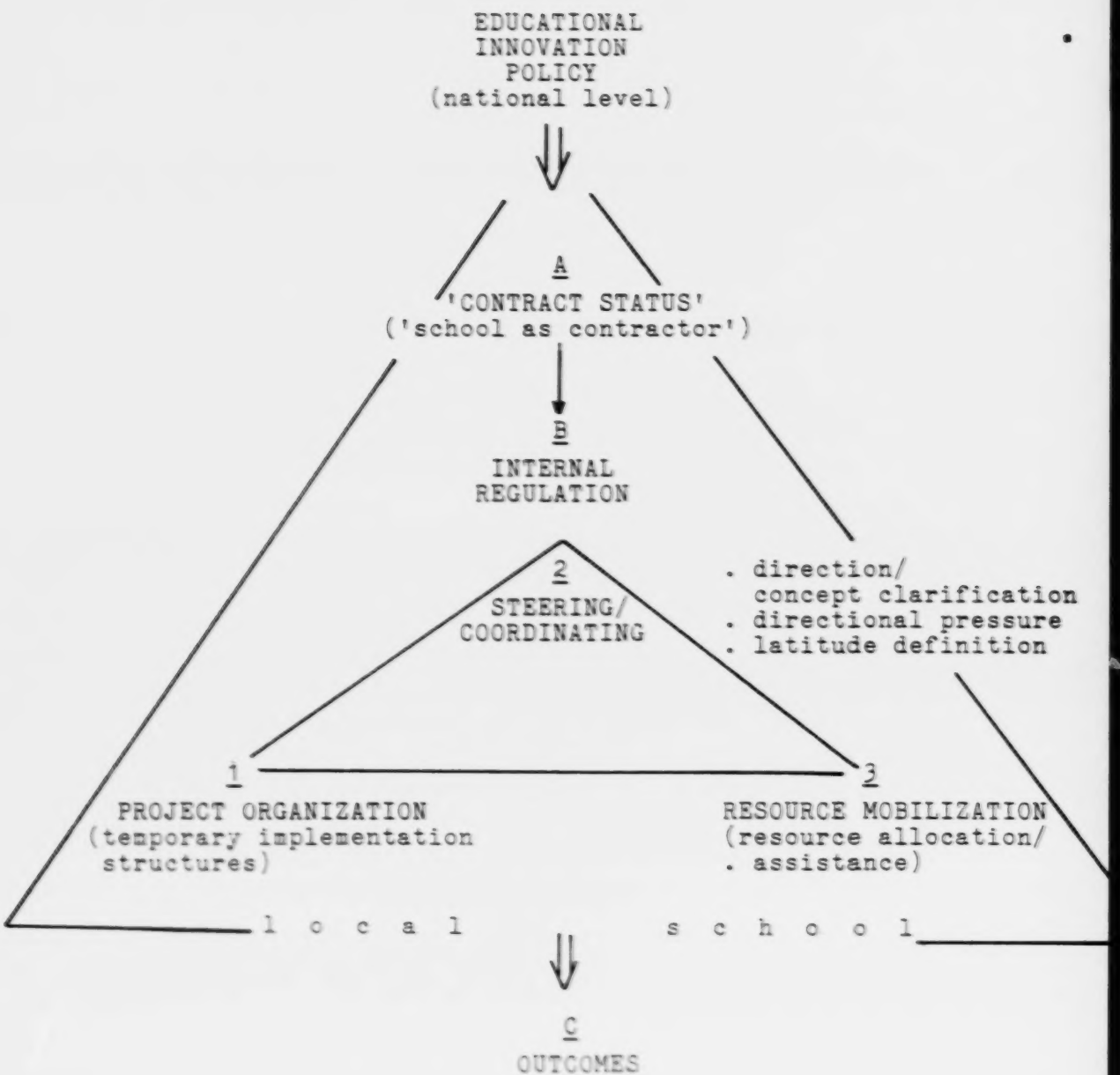
tive distance from the steering center of the project. Support work was somewhat dispersed through the school organization, and was not integrated in the framework of a temporary work structure.

In summary, there were schools - and their assisters - which negotiated and developed a project-focused relationship. In most cases, however, we found that schools actually did not develop a project-specific focus for support work. Support activities were not conceptualized and situated in the time-bound framework of project work. Most people in schools and their assisters did not conceptualize their relationship as a joint venture to implement a particular project. In only a few cases, did we find support articulated and framed as 'support for contracted implementation work'. In general, it seems to us that many schools did not identify specific inputs which they needed; they did not seem to use the notion of 'contracting for support'. Likewise, assisters did not seem to engage in a contract-building activity with their client-schools, which would result in a focused agenda for the helping relationship.

6. By way of summary

Our project endeavors to map and to conceptualize implementation efforts of comprehensive and contracted change in schools. Below we we present a conceptual map which we gradually developed during the course of our research project. This map serves here to summarize this paper. Although not every component of this framework has been elaborated in this article, we hope that it will serve both as summary and as an indication of the linkage between the various components.

FIGURE


EDUCATIONAL
INNOVATION
POLICY
(national level)
A
'CONTRACT STATUS'
('school as contractor')
B
INTERNAL
REGULATION
2
STEERING/
COORDINATING
. direction/
concept clarification
. directional pressure
. latitude definition
1
PROJECT ORGANIZATION
(temporary implementation
structures)
3
RESOURCE MOBILIZATION
(resource allocation/
. assistance)
l o c a l
s c h o o l
C
OUTCOMES

A central concept is what we termed '*contract status*' (A). Through 'contract status', a school is coupled in a special way to national educational policy. It is our belief that becoming a contractor for change with its associated accountability and time-bound framework both induces specific demands for change and intensifies and focuses the change processes which may be expected to occur in any (mandated) situation.

Two specific effects of contract status are as follows. Shifts occur in the school's relationships with its external environment (i.e. governmental agencies, other schools and parents), which in turn impact on the structure and functioning of the school. Specifically, the *internal regulation* of the school (B) will have to be characterized by increased coordination. This in turn will bring about shifts in power and influence patterns.
A second specific effect of contract status is to force the school to confront its own future - how it will deliver on new educational objectives with changed core activities.

Our model categorizes the areas in which change may be expected under the general heading 'internal regulation' (B), and specifically under the subheadings 'projectorganization' (B1); 'steering and control' (B2); and 'resource mobilization' (B3).

Under the sub-heading '*project organization*' (B1), we refer to the creation of new linkages for implementation work. We distinguish between creating temporary task structures as one device for linkage, and the development of normative linkage within the school.
Under '*steering and control*' (B2), we study the process of internal regulation and the roles of various parties in this process.
Under '*resource mobilization*' (B3), we refer to the availability of resources, and to the way the schools and external assistance agents relate to each other.

In this article we did not focus on '*outcomes*' (C). In our research project, however, we specify various outcomes, such as the use of new teaching methods and materials, and changes in classroom practice. Relating the quality and quantity of these outcomes to various aspects of internal regulation and contract status, which have been the main focus of this article, will be an important task in order to evaluate the effectiveness of contract status as a policy mechanism for bringing about mandated change.

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